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Review of Anyanwu, Ogechi E. The Politics of Access: University Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria, 1948-1960. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011, xvi + 298 pp.

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Education is central to nation-building in Africa. The huge investment in mass education from the era of decolonization by African leaders and policy makers found expression in the pivotal role it is capable of playing in the development of the human and material capital of the continent. However, access to mass education did not take place overnight. Indeed, until the demise of colonial rule, higher education was only available to very few and remained largely an elitist project. In *The Politics of Access*, Ogechi Anyanwu, tackles for the first time, the history of the transition of higher education from an elitist project to a populist one. According to Anyanwu, the push for mass university education, i.e. massification, "is central to understanding Nigeria's postcolonial socio-economic and political history" (1). Anyanwu argues that the "the premise of building a modern Nigerian nation underscored the pursuit of mass university education policies by Nigeria's successive postcolonial governments" (1). Although a lot of books have been written on Nigeria's education history covering the colonial and postcolonial periods, none has tackled the change and continuity in the politics of access to higher education.

This brilliantly written seven-chapter book is organized chronologically to demonstrate how political and economic transformation since the period of colonial rule has influenced the politics of access to higher education and the character of each regime and individuals involved. Chapter one engages some familiar history of the introduction of Western education, and the nexus between colonialism and education policy, to contextualize the chapters that follow. Anyanwu gives a penetrating analysis of the role missionaries played in the introduction of education from the 1840s when mission schools were first introduced to southern Nigeria and the disposition of the colonial government to it. Although Western education helped the missionaries and the British colonial government to produce clerks and clergies for their religious and administrative work, the British government did not want it to be accessible to everyone. This double standard reflected the British conviction that the training of highly educated colonial subjects was detrimental to colonial hegemony. According to Anyanwu the education provided by the missionaries was "not relevant to the immediate needs of the people." But this prejudice towards education was not left unchallenged from the second half of the nineteenth century as leading African nationalists began to criticize the British for not doing enough to fulfil its mission to "civilize" Nigeria through Western-styled education.

In response to this criticism, the British, as Anynawu points out, established Yaba Higher College in 1934 to give Nigerians clerical and vocational training to meet the lower cadre of officials for the colonial service. But the nationalists would soon criticize Yaba because its graduates were rated as inferior to their counterparts trained outside the country. Moreover, access to the college was very restricted to very few "qualified" candidates. Fifteen years after Yaba was establish, the University College of Ibadan (UCI, later University of Ibadan) came into existence though local and international pressure on the government which continued to pay a lip service to higher education for Nigerians. But like the Yaba, the UCI, as Anyanwu demonstrates was an elitist project which instead of helping to address the long-standing problems of higher education and access, added new crises to the ethnic conflagration in the country.

After presenting the much-required information about higher education, its restrictiveness and as a tool of imperialism, and the early move by Nigerians to force the British to revise its curriculum to serve the needs of Nigerians, Anyanwu then begins to carefully plough through the postcolonial phase of the politics of access to university training. Chapters two and three focus on the nexus between decolonization and the critical role that education was capable of playing in nation building. According to Anyanwu, the constitutional arrangement in 1954 that gave birth to regionalization played a significant role in creating a new era of massification of education as the governments of each of the regions, following the recommendation of Ashby Commission set up in 1959 to "help chart the course for the country's educational expansion," began to make the provision of higher education as a significant element towards the drive for regional development. In these two chapters, Anyanwu devotes quality space and deep analyses to the numerous sentiments expressed by Nigerian nationalists and political leaders at federal and states levels about the need to use education to transform their polities. By 1962, Anyanwu notes that four new universities founded by regional governments of eastern, western, and northern Nigeria had been established to address education imbalances and the limited access that the UCI offered.

The end of the Civil War in the 1970s coincided with the unprecedented increase in Nigerian foreign exchange earnings through crude oil, as Anyanwu shows in chapter 4. The massive investment in university education during the 1970s found expression in the Gowon's drive to heal the wounds of hostility through increase in education opportunities needed to close the gap of educational achievement between the north and the south. Unlike in the 1960s when university education was deeply regionalized, the centralization of university education in the 1970s was a strategic tool to accelerate and forge greater national integration in an extremely polarized society. Anyanwu clearly pontificates that the new

universities of the 1970s and the old regional ones were expected to give new meanings to Nigeria's unity, while also helping to address the age-long problems of limited opportunity to higher education. Although this expansion fulfilled some of the core agenda of the three military administrations in the 1970s, access to university education remained elusive in a country of over 68 million people in 1968.

Anyanwu dedicates two chapters to the exploration of changes and continuity in the politics of education in the 1980s. New developments such as the provision of free education, the involvement of state governments in higher education, introduction of a quota system, and the transformation of university curricula to emphasize the governments' quest to industrialize the country through science, were among the numerous steps taken to increase Nigerians' access to higher education while attempting to balance long standing problems of ethnic division that characterizes the Nigerian states. But as Anyanwu demonstrates, the economic crises in the 1980s compelled the government to suspend the expansion of university education as it struggled to maintain the existing ones. The final chapter of this book tackles the developments in the 1990s, characterized by the resumption of an expansion of university education though the establishment of specialized universities of science and agriculture. The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of private universities that most people believed would reduce pressure on government universities and help increase Nigerians' access to quality higher education.

In all, Anyanwu has done a great service to Africanist studies with this book. He has given us a book that connects education to broader challenges of nation-building and the endless quest to balance the numerous primordial interests in the country. By connecting the history of access to education with broader challenges of nation-building, Anyanwu has helped validate the popular rhetoric that education is a significant factor in Africa's drive towards sustainable development. His sources, which include reports by local and international policy organization, leading educationists, military and civilians leaders, among other classes of highly influential people, are qualitatively and quantitatively adequate for a work of this scope—even though the gap is the author's inability to integrate more voices of "ordinary" Nigerians on access to university education.

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